

INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR  
Montana City to Lincoln Road - *FEIS Comments and Responses*

## ATTACHMENT A

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INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR  
Montana City to Lincoln Road - *FEIS Comments and Responses*

**Comment #1: Jon Dilliard**

Sent: Friday, November 28, 2003 9:35 PM  
To: mstudt@state.mt.us  
Subject: I-15 FEIS

Mr. Studt:

I see by the website that a CD disk of Volume 2 of the I-15 FEIS is available. If possible, I would appreciate getting a copy for review. Please send it to:

Jon Dilliard  
1659 Karmen Rd.  
Helena, MT 59602-7310

I appreciate your attention and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Jon Dilliard

**Comment #2: Tammy Stefanik**

**Studt, Mark**

---

From: Stefanik, Tammy  
Sent: Wednesday, December 03, 2003 4:37 PM  
To: Studt, Mark  
Subject: RE: Custer interchange

Mark,

I live in the valley and work behind Walmart. I feel that a Custer Interchange is very important to the city of Helena's growing transportation needs. With so much growth in this direction I believe that it would relieve a lot of pressure off of Montana Ave. I am very much in support of a Custer Ave interchange. Please relay my beliefs on the importance of this issue.

Tammy Stefanik  
Driver Examiner, Dept of Justice  
443 -9270

**Response to Comment #1;**

A CD copy of the Final EIS, Volumes 1 and 2, was sent to Mr. Dilliard on December 2, 2003.

**Response to Comment #2;**

Thank you for your comments.

INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR  
Montana City to Lincoln Road - *FEIS Comments and Responses*

**Comment #3: Allen Chambers**

Sent: Wednesday, December 03, 2003 4:42 PM  
To: mstudt@state.mt.us  
Cc: ALCHAMBERS@aol.com  
Subject: I 15 Corridor Study Comments

Mr. Studt,

For the record, I believe the priority for construction of new highway interchanges in the Helena area should be as follows:

1. Custer Avenue Interchange
2. Capital Interchange
3. South Helena Interchange

I recently heard in a speech given by Janice W. Brown, Division Administrator, Federal Highway Administration at a highway Pre-Construction Conference that "Safety is Our Main Concern." With this in mind, I believe the Montana Department of Transportation and Federal Highway Administration should consider resolving existing highway safety issues at the Custer Avenue Overpass and Capital Interchange before committing Federal and State funds on a new South Helena Interchange. Setting aside the financial fact that preliminary plans are available, and land acquisition maybe advantageous at this time for the South Helena Interchange location.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to comment on the proposed projects.

Allen Chambers  
229 Meadow Drive  
Helena, MT

**Response to #3;**

Thank you for your comments. The Montana Department of Transportation's intent is to improve the operational efficiency within the entire corridor as quickly as possible (which includes safety). The order in which projects are initiated will depend upon many factors that the MDT and the Transportation Commission will consider as they go through the project development process. These elements include, but are not limited to; design complexities, right-of-way acquisitions, maintaining essential services such as utilities and access to businesses, the size and cost of individual projects and the adequacy of available funding for those projects.

INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR  
Montana City to Lincoln Road - *FEIS Comments and Responses*

**Comment #4: Pat and Fred Radke**

Pat & Fred Radke  
805 Tenneson Road  
Helena, MT 59602

December 4, 2003

Mark Studt  
MDOT  
2701 Prospect Ave.  
Helena, MT 59601


*RE: EIS I-15 Corridor Study*

Dear Mark,

We feel that the best place to build a new Interchange is on Custer Avenue. Lots of development is occurring at that part of town.

We also feel that a new Interchange by Saddle Drive should not be a priority. It seems from reading the newspaper that the owners of the land and their engineers are trying to "fast track" their property. Lets solve existing problems before building at this location. Thank you

Sincerely,



Pat & Fred Radke

Response to #4;

Thank you for your comments. For the order in which projects will be initiated, see response to Comment #3.

INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR  
Montana City to Lincoln Road - *FEIS Comments and Responses*

**Comment #5: Chuck Watters**

Chuck Watters  
3595 Rimini Road  
Helena, MT 59601  
(406) 459-3893

Response to #5;

Thank you for your comments. For the order in which projects will be initiated, see response to Comment #3.

December 4, 2003

Mark Studt  
Montana Department of Transportation  
2701 Prospect Ave.  
Helena, MT 59601

Re: EIS I-15 STUDY

Dear Mark:

I am writing this letter to give my comments on the proposed Interchange locations.

I believe the highest priorities would be to first improve the existing Capital Interchange and to build a new Interchange at Custer Avenue. These are both existing problems. The business growth and expansion on the North end of town logically support a new Interchange on Custer Avenue. The infrastructure (water and sewer) is already there.

I strongly oppose building a new Interchange at Saddle Drive (Padbury property) <sup>at this time</sup>. There is no infrastructure there at present and it is not a pressing need. Pressure and influence of the developers and property owners at this site is not a "justifiable reason" to build this Interchange at this time.

Thank you for reviewing my comments.

Respectfully,

  
Chuck Watters

XL COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR  
Montana City to Lincoln Road - *FEIS Comments and Responses*

**Comment #6: Russell Wrigg**

**From:** Russell Wrigg (wriggsensibaugh@msn.com)  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 04, 2003 5:00 PM  
**To:** mdteiscomments@state.mt.us  
**Cc:** GambrellKM@c-b.com  
**Subject:** Comment on I-15 Corridor EIS

My concerns over the I-15 Corridor EIS remain much same as when I commented on the Draft EIS. I for the life of me cannot understand how, with all of the public participation, the engineers and writers got to determining two alternatives that were almost identical except for the dropping of the Custer Interchange in favor of the Forestvale Interchange. The fact that the proposed South Interchange remains in both Alternative 1 & 2 smells fishy. MDT should be focused on providing improvements to the system first for safety and second for demand (use). The proposed south interchange does meet either of those tests. MDT should not select and build with taxpayers dollars infrastructure that's sole purpose is to promote growth. I have been around MDT during the days that Bill Diehl tried every political maneuver he could, to get an interchange in that area. The Department resisted those attempts then, as they should now. If the developers of the area to be served want an interchange, they should do more than pay for the design, they should fund it 100%. The users are paying tax dollars to keep the highway infrastructure up to current day safety and use standards. They do not expect to pay for infrastructure improvement to spur development.

My first priority for an interchange would be the reconstruction of the Capital Interchange and the completion of a west side frontage road from the Montana City Interchange to Saddle Drive. This interchange has long been known for it's dangerous and unwieldy condition. Along with being heavily used it's safety concerns are high.

The second priority should be the construction of the Custer Ave. Interchange. Along with the interchange project, a full blown reconstruction of Custer Ave. from Henderson to Washington needs to be accomplished. This area is currently the fastest growing commercial area in the Helena area. It needs the interchange access to serve the existing businesses, the airport and the schools. Without improved access to the area, traffic will become more congested then it already is and prospective customers will begin to avoid the area.

Remember, in order to serve the taxpayer (user) to the utmost, you must set your priorities using present day safety concerns and existing use over the temptation to serve the political drive towards "economic development".

Thank-you,

Russell E. Wrigg  
 36 So. Davis  
 Helena, Mt. 59601

(406) 443-7861  
 (406) 431-1758 cell  
[wriggsensibaugh@msn.com](mailto:wriggsensibaugh@msn.com)

**Response to #6;**

Thank you for your comments. City of Helena planning documents clearly indicate that development is likely to occur in the area south of US 12 and east of I-15. This near-term development creates a need along the I-15 Corridor for a new interchange south of Capitol. For this reason a new interchange at South Helena was included in both build alternatives analyzed in the Final EIS.

For the order in which projects will be initiated, see response to Comment #3.

INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR  
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**Comment #7: Steve Lodahl**

**Sent:** Thursday, December 04, 2003 8:50 PM  
**To:** mdteiscomments@state.mt.us  
**Cc:** GambrellKM@c-b.com  
**Subject:** Comment on I-15 Corridor EIS

**CUSTER INTERCHANGE**

I support the need for this interchange. The only problem I have with it is the timing. Back in 1992 when Shopko was being built, I was working as a laborer for Helena Sand and Gravel. During that time we were told that Shopko had offered to ante up 1/2 of what it would have cost to build the interchange.

Question: Who is putting up the money? Did Shopko renew their offer.

If the State, County, and City gotten off their collective duffs in 1992, the interchange would probably already be built and in use.

Where exactly is the south interchange being built? I read that it was going to be build adjacent to Saddle Drive. Shouldn't that be "COLONIAL DRIVE" since Saddle Drive is further west and takes many turns up and over the south hill?

I'd like to see an underpass built at the bottom of Broadway. I realize those residents living on Broadway are concerned about an increase in traffic, but they aren't looking at the big picture -- how much quicker will an ambulance get from the scene of an accident/incident from the area around WalMart towards E. Helena if there was an underpass on Broadway. Add to that, how would they feel if they or a member of family were the ones requiring transport to the hospital and the shortened trip meant life or death.

Steve Lodahl  
2553 Southridge  
Helena, Mt

**Response to #7;**

Thank you for your comments. At this point in time no funds have been specifically identified for the Custer Avenue interchange.

As described in the Final EIS, Section 2.8.2.1 (page 2-44) the proposed South Helena interchange will be located approximately 2.7 kilometers (1.6 miles) south of the Capitol interchange. The connection west of I-15 will be to the Frontage Road (relocated alignment, see Figure 2-11 in the FEIS). The FEIS also describes in Chapter 2.0 the possible extension of Broadway under I-15 and a possible Broadway interchange with I-15. Both of these concepts were strongly opposed by residents of the Broadway neighborhood which contributed to these options being dropped from further consideration (see FEIS Sections 2.4 and 2.5 and Table 2-1).

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**Comment #8: Chuck and Kim Norman**

December 6, 2003

To: Mark Studt  
MDOT  
2701 Prospect Ave.  
Helena, MT 59601

From: Chuck and Kim Norman  
1119 Toucan Road  
Helena, MT 59602

Re: I-15 & Custer Interchange

We feel an interchange in this location is a must for the Helena area especially with the increased developments in this area. The population in the Helena valley north of Lincoln road has exploded. The first exit available is the Cedar Street exit, which makes you either have to use Montana Avenue or get off at Cedar Street and go back via Montana Avenue. We have avoided shopping in this area as much as possible because of the traffic on Montana Avenue. Even with the new construction on Montana Avenue the traffic is still congested. This interchange would alleviate a lot of that traffic. This interchange has been something we have hoped for since we moved to the north valley 15 years ago.

Thank you for your consideration,

*Chuck Norman*

*Kim Norman*

Response to #8;

Thank you for your comments.

**Comment #9: John A. Wall**

Sent: Sunday, December 07, 2003 1:45 PM  
To: mstudt@state.mt.us  
Cc: mwall@powertownsend.com  
Subject: I15-EIS STUDY

THERE CAN BE LITTLE DOUBT THAT EVERYONE FAVORED ONE ALTERNATIVE AND THAT IS CUSTER AVENUE INTERCHANGE. LETS GET ON WITH THE NUMBER ONE SELLECTION. IF YOU ARE NOT FAMILIAR WITH THE AREAS DOLLAR PARTICIPATION, PLEASE REFER TO THE CITY OF HELENA AS IT IS APPARENT THAT ADJACENT PROPERTY OWNERS ARE WILLING TO PARTICIPATE IN SOME COSTS. AFTER 30 YEARS IT IS TIME TO GET THIS JOB DONE.  
[JAWLLC@hotmail.com](mailto:JAWLLC@hotmail.com)

JOHN A. WALL  
6235 Green Meadow Drive.  
Helena, Montana 59601

Response to #9;

Thank you for your comments.



# INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR

## Montana City to Lincoln Road - *FEIS Comments and Responses*

### Comment #10: Nancy Pitblado

**Sent:** Monday, December 08, 2003 8:51 PM  
**To:** mstudt@state.mt.us  
**Subject:** Comment on Final EIS I-15

Dear Mr. Studt:

Please include these comments in making the decision about the best alternative for I-15 interchanges improvements near Helena. I have followed these proceedings since Carter and Burgess began them. I am a member of the joint City/County Planning Board, for which this decision will have many repercussions. I consider the preferred alternative and the process by which it was achieved to be among the best I have ever seen. This began with an extremely contentious public. Commissioners were trying to protect their turf and capture where future development would occur as a result of highway improvements.

Through a painstaking and very thorough process -- including the preparation of supporting data-- the advisory group came to complete agreement. I would not have predicted this could occur. This consensus around the preferred alternative indicates a high level of commitment to both the process and the alternative. The preferred alternative combines improvements to existing interchanges with a new south interchange that will direct growth to an identified preferred development area. It achieves maximum bang-for-the-buck. Please endorse it and move forward with these excellent highway improvements. Thank you.

Nancy Pitblado  
 1122 Garfield St  
 Helena MT 59601  
[Npitblado@mt.net](mailto:Npitblado@mt.net)  
 406.449.0333

Response to #10;

Thank you for your comments.

### Comment #11: Steve and Judy Bayless

**Sent:** Tuesday, December 09, 2003 7:35 AM  
**To:** mstudt@state.mt.us  
**Subject:** Interstate 15 Interchanges - Helena

We would like to state our support for the interchange at Custer Ave.. This seems to be the best alternative of all the recommendations north of Helena.

We firmly oppose the alternative for an interchange at Forestvale Ave. Construction of this interchange, we believe, would lead to haphazard development in that area, even more so than already exists.

The widening of Montana Ave. which started last spring is great and should be expanded all the way to Sierra Ave. We would also recommend that something be done to improve the Lincoln Interchange. The design of this interchange makes it nearly impossible to adequately see approaching vehicles from the off ramp, and accidents and near accidents are common.

Thanks, Mark, for this opportunity to comment.

Steve and Judy Bayless

### Response to Comments #11;

Thank you for your comments. Continuing the improvements along North Montana Avenue was identified by a number of citizens during the early stages of the EIS as an important transportation need. However, as discussed in Chapter 2.0 of the Final EIS, these improvements lie outside the immediate I-15 Corridor study area.

Improvements to the Lincoln interchange are included as part of the Preferred Alternative (see Section 2.8.4.5 of the FEIS).

INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR  
Montana City to Lincoln Road - *FEIS Comments and Responses*

**Comment #12: Redge Meierhenry**

(12/09/03)

Sent: Tuesday, December 09, 2003 9:17 PM  
To: mstudl@state.mt.us  
Subject: Custer Interchange EIS

Mark:

I support the development and construction of an interchange at Custer and I-15 in Helena.

Currently, I-15 creates an artificial barrier that has served to divide the Helena valley. This division impedes the development of the valley and this unnatural barrier hinders transportation access from east-west across the valley.

A well-designed interchange serving the already growing nearby commercial development will facilitate commerce and measurably improve transportation access east-west across the Helena valley.

Sincerely,

Redge Meierhenry  
4 Eagle Rock  
Clancy, MT 59634

Response to # 12;

Thank you for your comments.

# INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR Montana City to Lincoln Road - *FEIS Comments and Responses*

## Comment #13: Dave Highness

**Sent:** Tuesday, December 09, 2003 9:51 PM  
**To:** mstudi@state.mt.us  
**Subject:** I15 FEIS Comment

Corridor Plan Authors,

I have a comment on the indirect effects of the proposed South Helena Interchange proposed in Alternatives 1 and 2. I think that the traffic impact on Broadway of this proposed interchange has been underestimated. I feel that all people commuting between Jefferson County, the Capital Complex and downtown Helena are going to want to use this interchange and then travel down Broadway. For these people to go all the way to Highway 12 will be out of their way. No matter what you do to the Capital Interchange, it will be less convenient than using a new South Helena Interchange. This seems like common sense to me.

I feel that this is going to greatly increase the amount of traffic on Broadway. Broadway is already near the limit of what it can carry during rush hour with the current design. I feel that soon after the Interchange is completed people are going to demand that Broadway be upgraded to move more vehicles.

As a resident of the Upper East side I see this as a reduction of the quality of life of my neighborhood. I like it that during non-rush hour times my neighborhood is quiet with little traffic noise. People can currently walk throughout the neighborhood in the evening and on weekends without dealing with busy streets and traffic. It is safe for kids to go to school and to the park without having to cross a busy street.

If East Broadway becomes a busy street with increased traffic flows at all hours of the day and night the neighborhood will not be the same. Kids will have to cross this busy street to get to the only grade school in the neighborhood, Smith School. They will also have to cross it to get to Locke Park. The road will be noisy at all hours of the day, even on the weekend. Property values will drop as the neighborhood will become less desirable to home buyers.

Maybe it is inevitable that this growth will occur. I feel that before it happens we should realize that this change is likely to occur and that we should plan for it to minimize its effect. I do not think that it is wise to minimize this likely effect.

I personally would like to hold off on the South Helena Interchange as long as possible. Why should I be excited about a lot of out of county traffic (not city taxpayers) and new growth ruining my neighborhood?

Thank you, Dave Highness  
1712 Highland Street  
Helena, MT 59601  
443-2040

## Response to #13;

Thank you for your comments. A great deal of effort was taken during the development of the I-15 Corridor EIS to address potential direct and indirect impacts to residential neighborhoods throughout the study area, with particularly close attention paid to Broadway due to the large number of comments received. The analysis shows a decrease in traffic along the western portion, no change in the center and an increase along the eastern portion of Broadway resulting from the I-15 Corridor improvements described in the Final EIS. These changes are described in Chapter 4.0 of the Final EIS and graphically represented in Figure 4-4.

For the order in which projects will be initiated, see response to Comment #3.

INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR  
Montana City to Lincoln Road - *FEIS Comments and Responses*

**Comment #14: Hope and Robert Stevens**

Response to Comment #14;

Thank you for your comments.

**Little Falcon Farm**

HOPE B. (HOPIE) STEVENS • ROBERT T. (BOB) STEVENS, JR.

P.O. Box 1510, Helena, Montana 59624  
Phone 406-442-9424

10 December 2003

The Montana Department of Transportation

Dear Director Galt:

Please be kind enough to insure that  
an opinion on the I-15 rejuvenation plan  
is properly recorded:

The undersigned are for the Preferred  
alternative - and strongly against alternative I

We have followed the proceedings since  
their inception and for the most part the  
consultants have done good work.

Kind regards

Robert T. Stevens Jr.

I agree with my husband!

Absolutely!

Hope Stevens

Little Falcon Farm is located off the utility grid in rugged, mostly timbered foothills of the Rocky Mountain Front 20 miles NNW of Helena. If you plan to visit us, ask for driving instructions. If you plan to send us normal mail, overnight letters, or parcels, use the U.S. Postal Service, if possible. We stop by our P.O. box 2 or 3 times a week. If you must use UPS, FedEx, or other private carrier, ask us for an alternative address.

INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR  
Montana City to Lincoln Road - *FEIS Comments and Responses*

**Comment #15: Cheryl Boid**

December 10, 2003

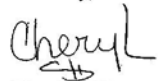
Cheryl Boid  
1999 Euclid Avenue  
Helena, MT 59601

Mark Studt, MDOT  
2701 Prospect Avenue  
Helena, MT 59601

Dear Mark:

I am writing in SUPPORT of the I-15 & Custer Interchange.  
I feel this interchange is long overdue for the safety and economic growth of Helena.  
This Interchange will relieve some of the congestion currently exhibited on Montana Avenue, Cedar Street & even Lincoln Road.  
As our City & County Commissioners continue to allow subdivisions into the Helena Valley, there needs to be a more effective way to move traffic other than 2-lane Montana Avenue.  
Having a Custer Avenue Interchange will also help the many residents who also live east toward York and Canyon Ferry. Again, large developments continue to be approved with little regard to traffic flow and safety. As more residents move further away from Helena city limits, transportation needs to meet up with them. The I-15 & Custer Interchange is just one step in the continued growth of Helena and Lewis & Clark County. It is a responsible step to take.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Boid

Response to Comment # 15;

Thank you for your comments.

**Comment #16: Kenneth and Rita McNees**

<b>From:</b>	Kenneth E McNees [mailto:kmcnees1@juno.com]
<b>Sent:</b>	Wednesday, December 10, 2003 8:20 PM
<b>To:</b>	mstudt@state.mt.us
<b>Subject:</b>	Fw: I-15 Interchanges

----- Forwarded message -----  
From: Kenneth E McNees <kmcnees1@juno.com>  
To: avarone@Co.Lewis-Clark.Mt.us, mmurray@co.lewis-clark.mt.us, etinsley@co.lewis-clark.mt.us  
Date: Wed, 10 Dec 2003 20:15:17 -0700  
Subject: I-15 Interchanges  
Message-ID: <20031210.201518.-4088421.0.kmcnees1@juno.com>

We just wanted to express our views on the two North interchanges that are contemplated North of Helena on I-15. We cannot see where the Forestvale Interchange should take president over the Custer Ave. Interchange. The Forestvale Interchange will not benefit the North East Valley at all as far as we can see. With the buildup on the North side of Helena in the past few years, it appears to us that the Custer Ave. Interchange would benefit the most. Sometime in the near future, a east/west truck route will have to be planned and built. The Custer Ave. Interchange could serve this purpose with the minimum outlay of expenditures to the city and the county. The Forestvale Interchange is only about four miles from the city limits. I find it difficult to visualize how much this would really benefit anyone coming into Helena from around the Forestvale area. It would not benefit anyone north of Forestvale very much. The Custer Ave. Interchange would be a much greater benefit. We prefer the Custer Ave. Interchange.

Kenneth and Rita McNees  
5646 Glass Dr.  
Helena, MT. 59602  
458-4725

Response to Comment #16;

Thank you for your comments.

INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR  
Montana City to Lincoln Road - *FEIS Comments and Responses*

Comment #17: John F. Wardell, EPA



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
REGION 8, MONTANA OFFICE  
FEDERAL BUILDING, 10 West 15<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 3200  
HELENA, MONTANA 59626

Ref: SMO

December 11, 2003

Ms. Janice Weingart Brown, Administrator  
Montana Division  
Federal Highway Administration  
2880 Skyway Drive  
Helena, Montana 59602

and

Mr. Dave Hill, Chief  
Environmental Bureau  
Montana Dept. of Transportation  
2701 Prospect Avenue  
Helena, MT 59620-1001

Re: CEQ # 030518, Final Environmental Impact  
Statement, I-15 Corridor, Montana City to Lincoln  
Road

Dear Ms. Brown and Mr. Hill:

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region VIII Montana Office has reviewed the Final Environmental Impact Statement for highway improvements to the Interstate 15 Corridor from Montana City to Lincoln Road.

Thank you for providing responses to EPA's DEIS comments. The EPA does not object to the preferred alternative (Alternative 1) involving:

- New interchange at South Helena (approximately 1.6 miles south of Capitol interchange)
- Interchange improvements at existing Capitol interchange
- New interchange at Custer Avenue and widening of Custer Avenue to four lanes between N. Montana Avenue and N. Washington Street
- Construction of two auxiliary lanes (each direction) on I-15 between Custer and Capitol interchanges
- Minor realignment of east side Frontage Road
- Replacement of twin I-15 bridges over Montana Rail Link railroad
- Montana City interchange improvements

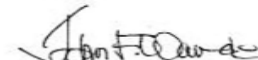
- Connect west side Frontage Road between Montana City and Colonial Drive
- Broadway underpass for pedestrian and bicycle use
- Widen Cedar Street to five lanes from I-15 to N. Montana Avenue
- Lincoln interchange improvements

In regard to transportation effects on growth and development, we continue to believe that highway interchanges can induce, facilitate, or accelerate growth and development and land use changes and property values near the interchanges. We also believe that indirect impacts associated with the induced, facilitated, or accelerated growth and development may affect the pattern of land use, population density, growth rate, and have effects on air and water and natural systems, including ecosystems. The indirect effects may best be mitigated by local government efforts to control the location of growth and development and reduce environmental impacts through local planning by stipulating in zoning and land use plans that development occur in designated growth areas, and integrating and coordinating local land use planning with transportation and environmental planning and review. EPA encourages utilization of "smart growth" concepts to minimize effects of growth and development on the environment, and proper planning and design of new infrastructure (see <http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/>). We believe local government infrastructure costs, including roads, can be reduced by smart growth planning concepts.

We are pleased that the FEIS includes discussion of smart growth initiatives and provides discussion of alternative modes of travel, and recommends action by local governments. We are also pleased that the preferred alternative improves the viability of TDM and transit improvements for local governments, and includes improved pedestrian and bicycle facilities that are compatible with the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan currently being developed. Thank you also for agreeing to develop a wetland mitigation plan, and coordinate with the regulatory agencies including the Montana Interagency Highway Wetlands Group.

The EPA appreciates the opportunity to review and comment during the NEPA process. If you have any questions please contact Mr. Steve Potts of my staff in Helena at (406) 457-5022 or in Missoula at 329-3313.

Sincerely,

  
John F. Wardell  
Director  
Montana Office

cc: Larry Svoboda/Julia Johnson, EPA, 8EPA-N, Denver  
Mark Stedt, Project Manager, MDT, Helena  
Dale Paulson, Program Development Engineer, FHWA, Helena

Response to Comment #17;

Thank you for your comments on the I-15 Corridor Environmental Impact Statement. Your comments on the Draft EIS and the active participation of Steve Potts

from your office contributed directly to improving the quality and overall responsiveness of the I-15 Corridor (Montana City to Lincoln Road) EIS. Thank you for your constructive and informative participation.

INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR  
Montana City to Lincoln Road - *FEIS Comments and Responses*

**Comment #18: Dudley Williams**

**Sent:** Friday, December 12, 2003 10:49 AM  
**To:** mstudt@state.mt.us  
**Cc:** Mark Studt  
**Subject:** I 15 Corridor

Mr. Studt:

My wife and I have lived on E. Broadway for 25 years. We bought our home when it was still a very nice neighborhood and place to raise our children. Over the years we have seen unlimited growth and traffic developed in this part of town. Please reconsider your decision to finish destroying a good neighborhood by tying this section to the interstate or secondary road just to aid commuters and people who want to develop this area. Why not concentrate on places that are already commercialized and needs to improve their flow of traffic .

Dudley Williams  
2129 E. Broadway  
Helena, Mt. 59601

email lwilliams@montana.com

**Response to Comment #18;**

Thank you for your comments. A great deal of effort was taken during the development of the I-15 Corridor EIS to address potential direct and indirect impacts to residential neighborhoods throughout the study area, with particularly close attention paid to Broadway due to the large number of comments received. The analysis shows a decrease in traffic along the western portion, no change in the center and an increase along the eastern portion of Broadway resulting from the I-15 Corridor improvements described in the Final EIS. These changes are described in Chapter 4.0 of the Final EIS and graphically represented in Figures 4-4 and 4-5.

INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR  
Montana City to Lincoln Road - *FEIS Comments and Responses*

**Comment #19: Dick Thweatt**



December 13, 2003

Mark Studt, P.E., Project Manager  
Montana Department of Transportation  
2701 Prospect Avenue  
Helena, MT 59601

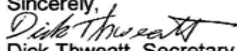
Re: I-15 Corridor FEIS

Dear Mark:

Plan Helena strongly supports the selection of Alternative 1 as preferred and believes Final EIS clearly supports this choice.

We still doubt that improvements to I-15 are most efficient use of public funds for transportation in our area. Other aspects of the local transportation system have much greater needs.

We also believe that an effective program of Transportation Demand Management in the Helena area could greatly reduce the need for such costly infrastructure improvements over the next 25 years. It is regrettable that MDT is unwilling to expend even a small fraction of available funding to study the potential effectiveness of TDM and to inform the local public, their employers and local government. It is the function of the state and national environmental policy acts to inform the decisions of the government and the public, even if that means challenging current biases. To dismiss TDM from detailed study because of lack of public interest is a cop out.

Sincerely,  
  
Dick Thweatt, Secretary  
for Plan Helena, Inc.

**Response to Comment #19;**

Thank you for your comments. Sections 2.7.1 and 4.11.2 of the Final EIS address transportation demand management (TDM). Potential activities that were considered and the reasons for not implementing the various elements of TDM are explained in the cited sections.

Some TDM activities that were considered include development of local Transportation Management Associations (TMAs); flex-time work schedules; carpools, and vanpools. Currently there is minimal use of existing TDM programs and very little public support was expressed for these measures during the public involvement process. (See page 4-45 of the FEIS)



INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR  
Montana City to Lincoln Road - *FEIS Comments and Responses*

**Comment #20: Karen D. Burk**

1-13-03

Mark Studt, P.E.  
Project Manager  
Montana Department of Transportation  
2701 Prospect Ave  
Helena, MT 59601

Dear Sir:

I am writing regarding the final EIS.

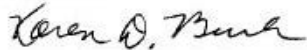
I am very disappointed that none of those involved in the preparation of this project cared about the property, homes and families on Broadway.

We certainly tried to tell you we do not want more traffic in our neighborhood but it is apparent our comments fell on deaf ears!

I hope you can not find the funds to build an interchange south of the capital interchange. I agree one is needed north of the capital interchange and improvements are needed in the capital interchange. It is a miracle there are not more accidents there.

Thank you for nothing!

Sincerely,



Karen D. Burk  
2001 Broadway  
Helena MT 59601

**Response to Comment #20;**

Thank you for your comments. A great deal of effort was taken during the development of the I-15 Corridor EIS to address potential direct and indirect impacts to residential neighborhoods throughout the study area, with particularly close attention paid to Broadway due to the large number of comments received. The analysis shows a decrease in traffic along the western portion, no change in the center and an increase along the eastern portion of Broadway resulting from the I-15 Corridor improvements described in the Final EIS. These changes are described in Chapter 4.0 of the Final EIS and graphically represented in Figures 4-4 and 4-5.

In addition, we looked very carefully at two improvement options at the east end of Broadway that received considerable public support. Both the Broadway/I-15 Interchange option and the Broadway Underpass option were dropped from consideration largely because of what we heard from residents of the Broadway community.

INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR  
Montana City to Lincoln Road - *FEIS Comments and Responses*

**Comment #21: Rick Gray**

**Sent:** Saturday, December 13, 2003 8:15 AM  
**To:** mstudi@state.mt.us  
**Subject:** comments to I-15 EIS

I prefer the Alternative 1. It has the most direct impact to economic development for Helena.

Rick Gray  
10 Elkhorn Dr.  
Clancy, MT 59634  
449-8318

Response to Comment #21;

Thank you for your comments.

**Comment #22: Tim Grossman**

**From:** tim grossman [tgrossman@direcway.com]  
**Sent:** Saturday, December 13, 2003 4:03 PM  
**To:** mstudi@state.mt.us  
**Subject:** FEIS I-15 Corridor

Dear Mark,

As a taxpayer in Jefferson county, I would like you to support The Preferred Alternative (Alternative #1) of the FEIS in the I-15 corridor.

In particular, I hope you might consider the Supporting Alternative as described in Section 2.8.4.3 as a priority in the timeline of the project.

There is considerable traffic on the dirt frontage road already, and in the summer months it was certainly a fire hazard as people drove their cars over heavy dry grass.

The developments between Colonial drive and Montana City have no direct access into town, and with no material or grading, the wet runoff and tires also are causing heavy erosion.

Thank you for taking the time for public input.

Tim Grossman  
15 Crossfire  
Clancy

Response to Comment #22;

Thank you for your comments. For the order in which projects will be initiated, see response to Comment #3.

INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR  
Montana City to Lincoln Road - *FEIS Comments and Responses*

**Comment #23: Mark Gerl**

**From:** mark Gerl [mark\_gerl@msn.com]  
**Sent:** Monday, December 15, 2003 9:33 PM  
**To:** mstudt@state.mt.us  
**Subject:** Comments on the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the I-15 Corridor

Dear Mr. Studt;

Attached are our comments on the EIS for the I-15 Corridor. We are disappointed that the comment period occurred during the holiday season.

Sincerely,

Mark S. and Kathleen D. Gerl

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**Response to Comment #23;**

Mr. Gerl's e-mail to Mark Studt indicates that specific comments on the FEIS were attached. The attachment was never received. Mr. Studt requested the attachment via e-mail and voice message but no further comments were received.

INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR  
Montana City to Lincoln Road - *FEIS Comments and Responses*

**Comment #24: Charlie McKenna**

**Response to Comment #24;**

Mark Studt

December 17, 2003

These are my comments on the Final EIS for the I-15 Corridor Study done for MDT.

I have reviewed the EIS and I support the selection of the Preferred Alternative, Alternative 1. This alternative is the best one for addressing the current shortcoming with the I-15 corridor and it also best deals with the anticipated traffic growth in the Helena area. All of my other comments concern the order in which the improvements contained in Alternative 1 are constructed. I realize that due to funding constraints the work must be done over a period of years, and that it may be many (ten or more) years before all of the work is done. Given this reality it is very important that the first project selected be the one that addresses the greatest needs as identified in the FEIS.

The two most important issues that need to be addressed by work in the corridor are to improve safety and to make the corridor more efficient in moving people and goods. After reviewing the FEIS it is obvious that the greatest safety concern in the corridor is the Capitol interchange. Table 3-7, Crash Data Summary, shows that this is the site with the most accidents and that this interchange had twice as many injury accidents in the study period as the second worst site. Figure 4-6, 2025 Average Weekday Interchange Utilization, shows that for Alternative 1 and 2 the Capitol interchange will have 77,000 vehicles, almost twice the traffic volume of the next busiest interchange. This shows that improvements made to this interchange will have the greatest good for the most people. These two tables/figures show that to maximize efficiency and safety in the corridor the first project to be constructed must be the Capitol interchange.

I have read in the Helena Independent Record that one of the proponents of the South Helena interchange is already designing that project. The newspaper indicated that effort would give that project a head start on the other proposed projects, and would make it likely that the South Helena interchange would be the first project constructed in the corridor. This would be a misuse of highway funds, because as the FEIS points out, there are few safety concerns that would be addressed by the South Helena project and due to the low projected traffic volumes gains in efficiency would be minimal. To address the two critical issues of safety and efficiency the Capitol interchange must be the first project to be constructed in the corridor. I would ask the MDT look at innovative construction methods, such as design-build to get this project underway in the next few years.

Thanks for giving me the opportunity to comment on this document.

Charlie McKenna  
608 Breckenridge St.  
Helena, MT 59601

Thank you for your comments. For the order in which improvements will be initiated, see response to Comment #3.

INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR  
Montana City to Lincoln Road - *FEIS Comments and Responses*

**Comment #25: Joseph and Randi Triem**

**Sent:** Thursday, December 18, 2003 9:22 PM  
**To:** mstudt@state.mt.us  
**Subject:** Comment on I-15 Corridor FEIS.

Hello Mark,

Attached is our official comment on the Interstate 15 Corridor/Montana City to Lincoln Road FEIS. It essentially supports the Preferred Alternative.

Thanks for your work on this,  
Joe & Randi Triem

**Response to Comment #25**

Thank you for your comments. For the order in which improvements will be initiated, see response to Comment #3.

December 18, 2003

Mark Studt, Project Manager  
Montana Department of Transportation  
2701 Prospect Avenue  
Helena, MT 59601

**Re: I-15 Corridor FEIS  
Public Comment**

Dear Mark:

**We would like to state our support for the “Preferred Alternative”, as stated in the Final Environmental Impact Statement – Interstate 15 Corridor/Montana City to Lincoln Road, prepared by Carter-Burgess.**

Furthermore, we recommend that the first phase to be constructed be the new South Interchange, with a Montana City to Colonial Drive frontage road. If constructed prior to the Capitol Interchange improvements, the southern improvements will not only divert northbound traffic bound for the hospital zone, but also will provide for a detour route to the Capitol Complex and downtown Helena. As an available detour route, the southern improvements will significantly reduce traffic volumes at the Capitol Interchange during the re-construction of that Interchange.

The right-of-ways for the southern improvements have already been acquired and the preliminary design of this project is under way. This phase does not seem to have as many barriers as the other phases of either alternative.

The Custer Interchange improvements, although important to eventually be constructed, will need a huge amount of coordination: acquisition of right-of-way, impacts to wetlands, addressing increased traffic flows on Custer Avenue in the area of Four Georgians School, potential for this route to be used as a bypass for Hwy 12 westbound truck traffic. It would seem that these Custer improvements could not possibly be ready to construct as soon as the Southern improvement, which is another good reason to construct the Southern improvements first.

Regards,

Joseph B. Triem & Randi J. Triem  
9 Crossfire Drive  
Clancy, MT 59634

INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR  
Montana City to Lincoln Road - FEIS Comments and Responses

Comment #26: Gerald Charlton (12/18/03)

Gerald Charlton  
110 S. Hannaford  
Helena, Montana 59601

12-18-03

To whom it may concern  
after watching the cutting  
together of the EIS for the I-15  
corridor and the way the  
area has developed since the  
beginning of the process, I feel  
the only practical thing to  
do in the area is:

1. For new interchange, it  
should be built at center  
ave. where the development  
is already in place and not  
south of the capital interchange  
as no development can  
take place at this time. If  
the developer want an interchange  
let them build and finance it.
2. We should also begin to  
redo the capital interchange  
as soon as possible. These  
2 projects can be done at the

same time if the work is  
properly planned.  
3. The last change on the  
list should be a new  
interchange somewhere to the  
south and the widening  
redo of the Lincoln Rd  
Interchange

Gerald Charlton  
110 S. Hannaford  
Helena MT 59601

Response to Comment #26

Thank you for your comments. For the order in which  
improvements will be initiated, see response to  
Comment #3.

INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR  
Montana City to Lincoln Road - *FEIS Comments and Responses*

**Comment #27: Loretta Kelly**

December 18, 2003

Montana Department of Transportation  
ATTN: MARK STUDDT, P.E.  
2701 Prospect Avenue  
Helena, Montana 59620

**RE: FEIS – INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR**

Dear Mr. Studdt:

I want to let you know how important I feel the Custer interchange is to our city. With the opening of Home Depot and the construction this coming spring or summer of the shopping center (Skyway Regional Shopping Center) to the east of Home Depot makes it glaringly obvious which interchange is desperately needed. Also, the word is that CostCo has finally committed to putting their new store on the land just south of Home Depot. What are you going to do with all the traffic for these new developments? What about the Queen City development that is proposed for the property just east of the wastewater treatment plant? And the continued expansions at the airport? What about the already large amount of traffic on Canyon Ferry and York roads of private home owners, as well as truck traffic to and from the east valley, East Helena and out on Canyon Ferry and Lakeside lakes? Are they going to dump all that traffic onto Washington Street and the Cedar Street interchange??? Scary thought!

I don't believe it takes a rocket scientist to realize that the most desperately needed interchange is one at Custer Avenue. The traffic flow in that area is already far too heavy for the streets in the area and the one lane bridge that is currently spanning I-15. I can't imagine anyone even considering building one south of the Capitol interchange instead of this one first. Yes, there's some development there and yes, there's private money involved, but how do you justify that to the much larger amount of general public who would be much better served by an interchange at Custer Avenue? What's more, have you driven the area around Custer on a daily basis? Have you seen the accidents? Have you seen the backed up traffic?

I would strongly urge that you check with those in the local planning offices who know about the many different businesses who are in various stages of building businesses in the Custer Avenue area. Much has changed in the past couple of years and you need to take a careful look at what is in the plans for the next year or two.

It's hard to imagine anyone would even consider even constructing a south interchange or one at Forestvale when it is glaringly obvious that the growth area for our city is around the Custer Avenue area.

The Helena community would be much better served by an interchange at Custer Avenue first and then secondly improvements to the Capitol interchange. In closing I wish to thank you for this opportunity to comment on this important issue for our community.

Sincerely,

  
Loretta Kelly  
1420 Sorenson Road  
Helena, Montana 59602

Response to Comment #27;

Thank you for your comments. For the order in which projects will be initiated, see response to Comment #3.

INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR  
Montana City to Lincoln Road - *FEIS Comments and Responses*

Comment #28: Shannon Kelly

Response to Comment #28;

December 18, 2003

Montana Department of Transportation  
ATTN: MARK STUDDT, P.E.  
2701 Prospect Avenue  
Helena, Montana 59620

RE: FEIS – INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR


Dear Mr. Studdt:

The Custer interchange is very important to Helena. All the development around the intersection of Montana Avenue and Custer, along with Home Depot and the other incoming businesses who'll begin building in 2004 make an interchange at Custer extremely important. It would be a huge mistake to not put an interchange in at Custer.

The traffic problems in that whole area are very bad and getting worse. Once these other businesses open it'll get even worse. It's just a matter of time before we have more than just numerous traffic accidents in that area. Sooner or later someone will be killed.

Yes, an interchange on the south side of town would be ok, but wouldn't be anywhere near as critical as the Custer Avenue one is. All the construction that is currently going on in the Custer Avenue area already promises to generate much larger quantities of traffic and it'll get much worse with the other large proposed developments coming in just east of I-15 along Custer.

Please don't let this opportunity slip away to make a much needed improvement to our city.

Sincerely,  
  
Shannon Kelly  
1420 Sorenson Road  
Helena, Montana 59602

Thank you for your comments. For the order in which projects will be initiated, see response to Comment #3.



INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR  
Montana City to Lincoln Road - *FEIS Comments and Responses*

**Comment #29: Shawna Kelly**

December 18, 2003

Montana Department of Transportation  
**ATTN: MARK STUDT, P.E.**  
2701 Prospect Avenue  
Helena, Montana 59620

**RE: FEIS – INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR**

Dear Mr. Studt:

I would like to encourage the urgent construction of the Custer Avenue interchange. Our city desperately needs an interchange at this location. I'm very surprised that one has not yet been constructed on Custer as it's been needed a long time.

The traffic in this area is very bad and getting worse, and it's only a matter of time before someone is killed.

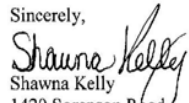
I know there are a lot of businesses already under construction in the area, not to mention a bunch of others who are on their way in the next year. We've fought hard to get business here in Helena, now it's here and more on the way so the logical solution is to put in an interchange at Custer to handle the huge increase in traffic.

I ask you .... how in the world will an interchange south of the Capitol interchange help the rapidly expanding businesses and traffic on Custer and North Montana??? Not at all!

Helena needs an interchange at Custer Avenue and we need one NOW.

Thanks for letting me comment on this.

Sincerely,

  
Shawna Kelly  
1420 Sorenson Road  
Helena, Montana 59602

**Response to Comment #29;**

Thank you for your comments. For the order in which projects will be initiated, see response to Comment #3.

INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR  
Montana City to Lincoln Road - *FEIS Comments and Responses*

**Comment #30: Marc and Rosanne Kneedler**  
(12/18/03)

Response to Comment #30;

Thank you for your comments. For the order in which projects will be initiated, see response to Comment #3.

12/18/03

Re: I-15 future interchange:

We urge you folks to choose  
Custer Ave. for the new  
interchange as it is the  
only location that badly  
needs one.

To put a southern interchange  
in first would be irresponsible  
at best.

Marc Kneedler Marc Kneedler

Rosanne Kneedler Rosanne Kneedler

705 Rhade Island  
Helena, MT 59601

INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR  
Montana City to Lincoln Road - *FEIS Comments and Responses*

**Comment #31: William S. Dunbar**

**William S. Dunbar**  
1709 Highland St.  
Helena, Montana 59601  
USA  
Home Phone 406-442-9347  
Email Bill\_Dunbar@msn.com

18 December, 2003

Mr. Mark Studt PE, Project Manager  
Montana Department of Transportation  
2701 Prospect Ave.  
Helena, MT 59601-9746

Re: Interstate 15 Corridor EIS

Dear Mr. Studt:

I have looked over the Final EIS for this project. Either of the Alternatives are terribly expensive when one considers the existing highway investment in I-15 and US 12. There are congestion and safety problems at the present time however, so something should be done.

The prime concern of the existing neighborhood residing on and near Broadway is the undesirable impact of Jefferson County and other thru traffic using the proposed South Interchange and the West Side Frontage Road as a "short cut" route to the Capitol complex and Downtown. A recent article in the IR pointed out this obvious problem and the EIS ignores it. Figure 4-4 leads one to believe we should be grateful for the "reduced traffic" on Broadway due to the new South Interchange. This is not logical unless something is done to deter this undesirable traffic pattern. As a minimum we'd appreciate some discussion and consideration of "Traffic Calming" or other techniques that might be employed to keep this traffic out of our established residential neighborhood. We hope it would be something better than a stop sign every block as they've done over the years on 8th and 9th Avenues.

The Broadway pedestrian-bicycle underpass will help pedestrians and bicyclists trying to go east and west but is it worth the \$1.5 Million expenditure? Since your going to redo Capitol Interchange, possibly good pedestrian-bicycle facilities there would suffice.

Since the South Interchange is in an undeveloped area one sees little reason to built it first when there are congestion and safety problems to the north.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

  
William S. Dunbar

**Response to Comment #31;**

Thank you for your comments. The analysis shows a decrease in traffic along the western portion, no change in the center and an increase along the eastern portion of Broadway resulting from the I-15 Corridor improvements described in the Final EIS. These changes are described in Chapter 4.0 of the Final EIS and graphically represented in Figures 4-4 and 4-5.

Also, for the order in which projects will be initiated, see response to Comment #3.

## INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR

### Montana City to Lincoln Road - *FEIS Comments and Responses*

#### Comment #32: Robert Dunlop (12/19/03)

Mark Studt  
MDT Project Manager  
Montana Dept. Transportation  
2701 Prospect Ave.  
P.O. 201001  
Helena, Mt 59620-1001

Mark Studt

I have reviewed the Interstate 15 EIS and found it to be lacking in a few areas and alarming.

The I-15 EIS significantly slights the original purpose of any interchange located in the Helena area. That purpose was to allow easier access of the Helena Valley residents to the I-15. None of the preferred alternatives comes close to providing that goal. Helena Valley residents will still not have easier interstate access should the so-called preferred alternatives be adopted.

The Sierra Road Interchange was not explored at all. The EIS merely said problems were found making it unadvisable. It is a shame that a firm paid nearly \$2,227,000 could not have come up with a little creative thinking. The current bridges on I-15 over Sierra Road could be incorporated into a working interchange giving the Valley access to the I-15. The savings of not having to build new bridges could have been forwarded to the school district to relocate and build a new Rossiter School. There is enough space in that area that the historic Silver Creek schoolhouse would not be disturbed and its grounds would be minimally impacted. Irrigation ditches can be rerouted.

The Forestville interchange was also slighted. This interchange would give Helena Valley residents a mid valley access point to the interstate. Building at Forestville would have a minimal effect on the current residential area namely because there are not many dwellings or structures that would have to be relocated. That land area is nearly vacant. The Forestville interchange has been in the planning and planned a long time. The EIS mentions the cost of building the interchange at Forestville. What the EIS fails to mention is the cost of not building the Forestville Interchange.

Several persons and business people have invested in the Forestville Interchange area. These investments were made and held after the State, Lewis and Clark County and City of Helena all announced their support of Forestville interchange. Not building Forestville Interchange after committing to it because of a change in plans by the City of Helena and Lewis & Clark County and the State of Montana causes these persons and business people financial loss. These people incurring financial loss by lack of Forestville's construction will look to and receive from the State financial compensation amounting in the millions. The Federal Government may not have to join in on this reimbursement and the financial burden could well fall directly on the State of Montana and the local governments of Lewis & Clark County and the City of Helena. Building Forestville interchange could be less expensive and more feasible than the financial satisfaction paid out to investors of the Forestville Interchange area.

The EIS also overlooks the adverse publicity the State of Montana will receive from the National business community via national publications that commitments made by the State of Montana and its local governments to prospective business people are not carried out and are in fact reneged. A few well-placed letters to the proper financial journals will undermine any effort the State of Montana has made to recruit new business. I can't put a dollar cost on this kind of publicity.

The Custer and Montana Ave intersection currently is a disaster. To build an interchange on Custer Ave would only add to the aggravation and may render this intersection unusable. An interchange located at Custer Ave that provides south bound access will invite vehicle conflict with exiting traffic on the Cedar Street exchange. Entering traffic from the northbound Cedar Street interchange will encounter vehicle conflict with exiting traffic to Custer Ave interchange. Furthermore the proposed Custer Ave interchange is not mid-valley and would not serve the current valley population well or as expeditiously as an interchange mid valley to the north such as Forestville or Sierra.

The proposed south interchange is a proposal that comes from sources other than those that live in the area. It is a proposal by a group of individuals prodded by a developer who wants to develop a piece of vacant land. Not only does this developer want an interchange he is kind enough to let the State of Montana know how it should be designed. It is somewhat confusing to propose an interchange here considering that a vast majority of people have spoken out against it. It makes one wonder why build an interchange for a non-existing population when you can build one mid valley to the north for



**Helena Campground  
R.V. Park**  
5820 NORTH MONTANA AVENUE  
HELENA, MONTANA 59602

an existing population. It also makes one wonder why when the City of Helena passed an open space bond issue that the local government would be in a hurry to develop land already open. Why in goodness name would you not want to build an interchange where the population already exists? Why is the EIS trying to serve a developer? It sure doesn't seem it is trying to serve the current population in the valley.

There has been no court decision to date that says a mid valley interchange could not be constructed. What a recent court held was that an EIS had to be conducted.

I think this Interstate 15 EIS needed to be redirected and a mid valley interchange to the north of Helena be constructed.

Submitted by  
Robert Dunlop  
5820 N. Montana Ave.  
Helena, Montana 59602

*Robert Dunlop*  
*19 December 2003*

#### Response to Comment #32

Thank you for your comments on the I-15 Corridor Environmental Impact Statement.

After very carefully considering the advantages and disadvantages of the two build alternatives and the No-Action Alternative, Alternative 1 was identified as the one which best meets the overall needs for the entire corridor. This decision was based on both the Purpose and Need statement, which is fully described in Chapter 1.0 of the Final EIS, and on extensive public input received throughout the development of the EIS.

Both the Sierra Road and Forestville Road locations were studied in the Draft EIS and the Forestville option received full consideration in the Final EIS.

Traffic analysis conducted for the FEIS does not support your contention that the Custer Avenue/N. Montana Avenue intersection will be unusable if a new interchange is built at Custer Avenue.

INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR  
Montana City to Lincoln Road - *FEIS Comments and Responses*

**Comment #33: Shaun O'Connor**

December 19, 2003

Mark Studt  
Montana Department of Transportation  
2701 Prospect Avenue  
Helena, MT 59620

RE: I-15 Corridor Study

Dear Mark,

Following are the comments regarding the I-15 Corridor study:

1. A pedestrian/bike path needs to be incorporated into the new frontage road between Montana City interchange and the Capital interchange.
2. What is the purpose of the South Helena interchange? If the interchange is only connecting to Saddle Drive, then why not move the interchange back to the South Hills Road. Maintain the frontage road on the west side and develop a new frontage road on the east that connects to US12 or onto Tricia St. It seems like the South Helena interchange is being developed by others for their future development. Should the taxpayers pay for this development?
3. The Capital interchange needs to be widened to three lanes going in and out of Helena. In Figure 2-5, the underpass and the off ramp from the north is very close. Is this configuration going to work? The connection at 11<sup>th</sup> needs to drop in elevation. Will this grade meet standards?
4. Cedar Street interchange should be a four lane with a center turn lane that connects to Montana Avenue.
5. Custer Avenue interchange area is developing very rapidly. Custer Avenue should be a four lane with a center turn lane that connects to Montana Avenue. In conjunction with this interchange, I believe that Montana Avenue should be a four lane road with a center turn lane from 11<sup>th</sup> to Lincoln Road.
6. Forestvale Road interchange should be included into this study. The North Montana area seems to be developing faster than the South Helena area. There is more commercial area in the North Montana area where the South Helena area is mostly residential.

In summary, I believe the order that these projects should be built is:

1. Custer Avenue Interchange with improvements to Montana Avenue.
2. Capital Interchange Improvements with frontage roads from Montana City.
3. Cedar Street Interchange improvements with new structure over the railroad.
4. South Hills Road Interchange/ Forestvale Interchange.
5. Lincoln Road Interchange/ Montana City Interchange.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Shaun O'Connor  
P.O. Box 594  
East Helena, MT 59635

**Response to Comment #33**

Thank you for your comments. The initial plan for the west side Frontage Road is to provide shoulders that will also serve bicycles on each side of the road. There should be little need for sidewalks until there is development alongside the Frontage Road. Local jurisdictions may require developers to build additional pedestrian facilities along their developments.

As part of planning for future growth, the City of Helena has designated the area east and north of the proposed South Helena interchange as a preferred development area. Infrastructure such as water and sewer has been constructed or planned to serve this area. The new interchange will connect with the west side Frontage Road. A frontage road or other roadway connections on the east side of I-15 may be constructed by developers of this area.

The conceptual layout for the Capitol interchange was planned for three through lanes in each direction through the interchange. The geometry of the conceptual layout was designed based on MDT and other applicable roadway standards, and all standards were met based on a preliminary level of design. Both MDT and the City are working to widen Cedar Street and re-stripe the interchange to have the four-lane plus turn lane (or five-lane) section between I-15 and Montana Avenue. The plan for Custer Avenue, once an interchange is constructed, is to have four lanes plus the center turn median between Montana Avenue and Washington Street. Any work on Montana Avenue is outside (Continued on next page)

INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR  
Montana City to Lincoln Road - *FEIS Comments and Responses*

**Response to Comment #33 - cont.**

the I-15 Corridor study area and would need to be pursued by the City and County.

The Forestvale interchange location was fully analyzed in this study. There was no evidence to show a need for two new interchanges north of Cedar Street. As described in the Final EIS, the Custer Avenue interchange location provided the greatest overall benefit for the I-15 Corridor.

Finally, to address the “order that the projects should be built”, see response to Comment #3.

INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR  
Montana City to Lincoln Road - *FEIS Comments and Responses*

**Comment #34: Glenda Bradshaw**

**Sent:** Friday, December 19, 2003 9:51 PM  
**To:** mstudt@state.mt.us  
**Subject:** I-15 FEIS Comment

Dear Mr. Studt,

I spent a couple of hours reviewing the FEIS for the I-15 corridor from Montana City to Lincoln Road at the Lewis and Clark Library early this week. Though I favor several of the features of the preferred alternative described, I have a major objection to a new South Helena interchange.

There is no discussion that I could find in the FEIS about the increase in traffic that a South Helena interchange would generate through the residential neighborhood streets that are already busy. I did find a map that indicated increased traffic to the hospital/medical complex area near I-15, but it also indicated that there would be almost no increase from there eastward into Helena. The EIS seemed to ignore the obvious--people will use the South Helena interchange to get to and from the Capitol complex, downtown Helena, points in between, and probably even to cross to the westside and beyond. In other words the South Helena exit will turn Broadway and Winnie into a south bypass by default.

I also think it is a conflict of interest for the producers of the EIS to acquire or own property for development in the area they are recommending as a preferred alternative.

In addition, I feel that the proximity to Christmas of the comment deadline will ensure that few people will be able to respond due to the demands of the holidays.

The FEIS features that I favor include improvements to the Capitol interchange, the bike/pedestrian underpass at Broadway, a new interchange at Custer, and improvements to the Lincoln interchange. Of these I would rank the Capitol interchange as top priority.

Sincerely,  
Glenda Bradshaw  
430 S. Lamborn St.  
Helena, MT 59601

**Response to Comment #34;**

Thank you for your comments on the I-15 Corridor Environmental Impact Statement. Chapter 4.0 of the Final EIS provides a thorough analysis of potential impacts to residential neighborhoods. Both direct and indirect impacts are discussed and each of the two build alternatives was compared to the No-Action Alternative. This analysis included a careful consideration of traffic impacts.

Your comment letter includes a suggestion that there might be a conflict of interest issue concerning the development of this EIS. The Consultant, Carter & Burgess, prepared the FEIS under the direction of FHWA and MDT. Neither agency nor the Consultant own property for development (for other than transportation purposes), in the areas identified under the Preferred Alternative.

Also, for the order in which projects will be initiated, see response to Comment # 3.

INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR  
Montana City to Lincoln Road - *FEIS Comments and Responses*

**Comment #35: Barbara and James Benish**

**Sent:** Sunday, December 21, 2003 8:44 PM  
**To:** mstudt@state.mt.us  
**Subject:** 1-15 Corridor Plan

12/21/03

Dear Mr. Studt,

My husband and I have lived at 1302 Highland Ave. for eighteen years and have seen increasing traffic on Broadway and our adjacent street, Highland, each year. We ask that the 1-15 Corridor Plan not be adopted in consideration of all the neighborhoods that would be negatively impacted by the greatly increased traffic that very probably would occur on Broadway. During the past two years when sections of Broadway have been closed and traffic rerouted on our street, the noise, dust, and parking difficulties have been onerous to say the least. To say that Broadway and the adjacent streets and neighborhoods should have to bear the brunt of traffic and the problems such traffic will bring seems very unjust. Please do not adopt this plan.

Sincerely,

Barbara A. & James K. Benish  
1302 Highland St.  
Helena, MT 59601-5241  
(406) 442-3452

The older I get, the better I was...  
Walter Mathau

**Comment #36: Cary Shelton**

**Sent:** Monday, December 22, 2003 7:32 AM  
**To:** mstudt@state.mt.us  
**Subject:** Custer

I saw the ad about losing the interchange at Custer. I thought this was decided a long time ago. Why the possibility of losing it? Let's go forward and get it started as soon as possible. We are in support of it.

Cary Shelton  
3923 Ed Rose Dr.  
Helena, MT

**Response to Comment #35;**

Thank you for your comments on the I-15 Corridor Environmental Impact Statement. A great deal of effort was taken during the development of the I-15 Corridor EIS to address potential direct and indirect impacts to residential neighborhoods throughout the study area, with particularly close attention paid to Broadway due to the large number of comments received. The analysis shows a decrease in traffic along the western portion, no change in the center and an increase along the eastern portion of Broadway resulting from the I-15 Corridor improvements described in the Final EIS. These changes are described in Chapter 4.0 of the Final EIS and graphically represented in Figures 4-4 and 4-5.

**Response to Comment #36;**

Thank you for your comments. The Custer Interchange has not been removed from the Preferred Alternative.



INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR  
Montana City to Lincoln Road - *FEIS Comments and Responses*

**Comment #37: Loren Gustafson**

**From:** Loren Gustafson [loren@ourredeemerlives.org]  
**Sent:** Monday, December 22, 2003 3:39 PM  
**To:** mstudt@state.mt.us  
**Subject:** EIS study

Mark Studt,

Are you still taking comments on the Custer Avenue Interchange project? I thought that the decision was made to make this a priority but have heard comments lately that it is still up for consideration against other sites.

Our congregation, Our redeemer's Lutheran Church, purchased 20 acres for development of a new church ministry campus just north of Custer Ave. on Green Meadow. We expect to expand our active ministry and weekly church school in a significant way when we relocate. We already have a large number of families from East Helena, Montana City and even Boulder and beyond who would make excellent use of an interchange at I15 and Custer.

I strongly support the location of Custer Ave for the new interchange for the convenience and safety of our 1,200 plus members.

Thank you,

Loren Gustafson

**Response to Comment #37;**

Thank you for your comments. The Custer Interchange is still part of the Preferred Alternative. For the order in which projects will be initiated, see response to Comment #3.

INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR  
Montana City to Lincoln Road - *FEIS Comments and Responses*

**Comment #38: Dick Anderson**



**DICK ANDERSON CONSTRUCTION, INC.**

**Response to Comment #38;**

Thank you for your comments. For the order in which projects will be initiated, see response to Comment #3.

December 22, 2003

Mark Studt, P.E.  
Project Manager  
Montana Department of Transportation  
P.O. Box 201001

Dear Mr. Studt,

This letter is in support of all the interchange projects for the Helena area. The Custer Avenue Project should come first because the development and need already exist. Both the Capitol and South Helena Interchange are also very important and need to also be funded. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



Dick Anderson

INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR  
Montana City to Lincoln Road - *FEIS Comments and Responses*

**Comment #39: Kim Smith**

MARK STUDT  
PROJECT MANAGER  
MONTANA DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION  
P.O. BOX 201001  
HELENA MT 59602-1001

DEAR MR. STUDT.

AS AN OWNER OF TEN PROPERTIES INVOLVED  
IN THE AREA OF THE INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR, I  
FEEL THE PROJECTS SHOULD GO.

- ① CUSTER AVENUE
- ② FORRESTVALE
- ③ IMPROVE LINCOLN ROAD
- ④ SOUTH INTERCHANGE.

THANKS FOR YOUR TIME.

Kim Smith,  
3734 MC AUGHT.  
406-449-4045



**Response to Comment #39;**

Thank you for your comments.

After very careful consideration of both build alternatives and the No-Action Alternative, Alternative 1 was identified as the Preferred Alternative for the I-15 Corridor. This alternative does not include a new interchange at Forestvale Road.

Also, for the order in which projects will be initiated, see response to Comment #3.

INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR  
Montana City to Lincoln Road - *FEIS Comments and Responses*

**Comment #40: Ann Macdonald****Response to Comment #40;**

3-03 03:40pm From-MDT CONSULTANT DESIGN SECTION

4064446253

T-436 P.002/003 F-287

[12/22/03]

In 12 hours we were able to obtain 1000 signatures for the Custer interchange. I know there are many thousands of more signatures out there that want this interchange.

Subdivisions all over the Helena valley that want this interchange to take place. Including the York area, East Helena, Cannoy ferry. Many subdivisions are using the Custer Highway, and it would be beneficial to them.

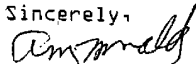
... National guard would like a interchange here. I talked to a Cornnel and he said it would be advantage to them for moving thier heavy equipment, so they wouldn't be using a heavy traffic area.  
The County Fairgouds would greatly benefit.

We could do this with all of the safety funds, bridge funds and all else available, like donated property. If this isn't started NOW, we could loose the donated property. We must get this started  
The rest would then fall into place.

Enclosed find a page of commissioners signature from March of this year

Considering it was a holiday yesterday, I am sending this to you today.

Sincerely,



Ann Macdonald

Thank you for your comments. In addition to your letter, we have received 683 unverified signatures on a petition supporting the construction of the Custer interchange. No comments were received specifically from the Montana National Guard.

Also, for the order in which projects will be initiated, see response to Comment #3.

INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR  
Montana City to Lincoln Road - *FEIS Comments and Responses*

**Comment #41: Form Letter (27 copies received)**

**I SUPPORT THE CUSTER AVENUE INTERCHANGE**

The retail center of Helena is now on the north-end of the City in the Montana Avenue and Custer Avenue area. We need an interchange for I-15 there NOW. There is nearly \$6 million available for work on that interchange RIGHT NOW. There are landowners adjacent to the interstate and Custer Avenue ready to donate land for the interchange. There are businesses ready to pay a portion of the interchange costs. The City and County Commissioners have all sent a letter to the Montana Department of Highways saying "We strongly encourage this project begin as soon as possible."

Spending of the federal money for interstate interchanges in the Helena area should first be at Custer to help the many tax-paying businesses that already exist in the area (some of which really need the help). The federal funds should not be spent for an undeveloped area south of the City until there are signs that development is occurring there.

**Response to Comment #41;**

Twenty-seven signed copies of the form letter shown on the left, supporting the immediate construction of a new interchange at Custer Avenue, were received during the public review comment period. Contact the Montana Department of Transportation for a copy of all twenty-seven form letters.

For the order in which projects will be initiated, see response to Comment #3.

The Federal Highway Administration and the Montana Department of Transportation thank each of these individuals for their comments and participation in the I-15 Corridor EIS project.

INTERSTATE 15 CORRIDOR  
Montana City to Lincoln Road - FEIS Comments and Responses

**Comment #42: Petition**

**SUPPORT**  
**CUSTER AVENUE INTERCHANGE**

**IMMEDIATE NEED**

We **Support** the construction of an Interchange at Custer Avenue.

Name	Address
Lynden Marino	821 Idlewild Ct Helena MT 59601
Carolyn Sumner	177 Briarwood Lane Helena MT 59601
Doreen Shields	5247 McHugh Dr. #16 Helena MT 59602
Juan Piller	138 Jimmy Green Rd E. Helena MT 59603
Dorothy Colet	125 E. Howie St. Helena MT 59601
John & Rhyly	1417 Orange Ave Helena MT 59601
Quinn Riley	919 Cannon St. Helena MT 59601
V. L.	6111 Canyon Ferry Rd Helena MT 59602
Sharon Moor	1200 J. S. Lynn St Helena MT 59601
Mike Shattiff	5490 N. Montana Helena MT 59602
Bob Maud	821 Idlewild Ct Helena MT 59601
Elizabeth Marino	821 Idlewild Ct Helena MT 59601
Cassandra Hestler	824 Idlewild Ct Helena MT 59601
Michelle Harrer	825 Dearborn Helena MT 59601
Sharon Jensen	1512 Summit Helena MT 59602
Bonnie Stevens	2400 York Rd Helena MT 59602
Ben Stelzer	610 Franklin Ave Helena MT 59602
Cynthia Fish	1370 Peosta Ave Helena MT 59601
Donald Cooper	P.O. Box 6564 Helena MT 59604
Hilda Funk	1525 Beaverhead Helena MT 59602

**Response to Comment #42;**

A petition in support of the construction of an interchange at Custer Avenue was received with 683 signatures on 40 separate pages similar to that shown on the left. No attempt was made to verify signatures or scan the list for duplicate signatures. Contact the Montana Department of Transportation for a copy of all signatures.

The Federal Highway Administration and the Montana Department of Transportation thank the petitioners for their input and participation in the I-15 Corridor EIS project.